SOCIAL NETWORK INTERACTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates to social network interaction.

BACKGROUND TO THE INVENTION

[0002] User interaction with social network applications is usually by means of logging into a website and thereafter browsing pages of the website over the Internet.

[0003] Social network applications contain large quantities of information and store profiles for large numbers of people. This means that, in order for a user to locate a particular contact, a number of sequential browsing steps are required over the Internet. There may be numerous people with the same or similar names, and so further browsing steps are required to confirm that a particular profile corresponds to the required contact. Even when a user is connected to a contact, applying a social network function to that contact, such as a photo sharing function, will require transmission of a number of separate commands including selecting the function from a menu of available functions, then selecting the or each friend.

[0004] As well as being time-consuming, each browsing step requires data to be transmitted and received over a network such as the Internet. Where communication with social network applications is performed using a wireless data terminal, such as a mobile telephone or tablet computer, data usage is an important factor given the limited bandwidth available.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] A first aspect of the invention provides apparatus comprising:

[0006] means for receiving through a user interface a user gesture made in relation to one or more displayed digital images, the or each image having one or more tags each identifying an entity displayed in the or each image;

[0007] means for identifying locally a predefined social network function corresponding to said received user gesture and a selected tagged entity or entities indicated by said gesture; and

[0008] means for communicating the locally-identified function to an external social network application so as to apply thereat said function in relation to the selected entity or entities.

[0009] The identification means may be configured to identify, from the received user gesture, correspondence with one of a plurality of locally-stored reference gestures each of which may be associated with a respective different social network function for being applied at an external social network.

[0010] The apparatus may further comprise a locally-stored contact list configured to store, for the or each tagged entity, associated identification data to enable the communicating means to uniquely identify a selected entity or entities to an external social network application where they have a presence. The contact list may be configured to store, for the or each tagged entity, identification data for a plurality of different external social network applications where the entity has a presence. The communicating means may be configured to select a subset of the different social network applications with which to apply the social network function dependent on one or more selection rule(s) applicable to at least one of the social network applications. The selected social network function may be configured, when applied by the communicating means, to share stored content (or link online content) with the selected entity or entities, and in which the selection rule(s) determine the subset of social network applications dependent on metadata associated with the content. The selection rule(s) for a social network application may identify a geographical location such that only content having metadata corresponding to said location may be shared when the selected social network function is applied.

[0011] The identifying means may be configured to identify a gesture made across two or more independent, simultaneously displayed images to indicate selection of tagged entities appearing in different images.

[0012] The user interface may be a touch-screen through which touch-based user gestures are received by the receiving means.

[0013] The apparatus may further comprise means to display visually a path representative of the received user gesture.

[0014] The apparatus may further comprise means to display visually selection of an entity or entities during receipt of a gesture.

[0015] One of the reference gestures may be associated with a friend/join network request function at an external social network application, and wherein the communicating means may be configured subsequently to apply the function to the social network application in relation to one or more selected entities indicated by the gesture.

[0016] One of the reference gestures may be associated with a friend/join network recommendation function at an external social network application, and wherein the communicating means may be configured subsequently to apply the function to the social network application in relation to two or more selected entities indicated by the gesture.

[0017] One of the reference gestures may be associated with a content sharing function at an external social network application and wherein the communicating means may be configured subsequently to apply the function to the social network application so as to share thereat stored content with one or more selected entities indicated by the gesture. The stored content may be taken from a different application from that showing the tagged digital images.

[0018] The receiving, identifying and communicating means may be provided in a single software application and said software application may be configured to run automatically upon operation of an image viewing application provided on the apparatus.

[0019] The apparatus may be communications terminal, for instance a wireless communications terminal.

[0020] A second aspect of the invention provides apparatus comprising:

[0021] a gestural control application for associated operation with an image viewing application, the gestural control application being configured to receive user gestures inputted through a touch-sensitive display of the apparatus when one or more images is displayed by the image viewing application, to identify a correspondence between said received gesture and one of a plurality of locally stored reference gestures, to identify selection by means of the inputted gesture of one or more entities in the or each image, and to communicate and apply a function associated with the identified reference